



CASA OF BALTIMORE

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA Baltimore
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WINTER 2013

CASA'S HOLIDAY PARTY WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!

CASA's Holiday Party at Mt. Washington Conference Center was a great get-together for many volunteers, staff and board members. A special thanks goes to the CASA staff for their wonderful poem and for leading everyone in a dance!!



Because of the generosity of many people it was possible for CASA of Baltimore to provide all our CASA children with a holiday gift. Contributions came from individuals, businesses, happy hours, and gift boxes. Thank you to all who helped and gave this year!

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**CASA of BALTIMORE
INFORMATION SESSION**

**Wednesday, March 15
6:30 - 8:00 pm**

Hunting Ridge Church
4640 Edmondson Ave.
(parking in front of church)

The “Michael Phelps” of Court Appointed Advocacy!

Looking back now as a 3 year CASA veteran volunteer and in the midst of his second CASA assignment, Ed still remembers just how nervous he and first CASA youth were. His face flushed with the memory as he remembered those first few visits. Ed shared, “When I started, it seemed somewhat overwhelming, I felt like a fish out of water, but with each visit, my confidence grew and comfort level increased”. It would not be a boast to say, that today, Ed Hambleton is the ‘Michael Phelps’ in the waters of volunteer advocacy.

Ed hails from New York City spending, a good many of his summers here in Maryland visiting with family. In 2008, Ed moved to Baltimore and is now splitting his week between Baltimore and Richmond, VA. Despite his hectic schedule, he maintains consistent contact with his assigned CASA youth, makes every team meeting, court hearing and is often present for his CASA teen’s athletic events. Ed, in describing their relationship comments, “Though my kid is not particularly verbal, I sense that our connection is real and our bond meaningful to him.” Ed remembering his first assignment, “I know that teens don’t divulge very much. I learned from my first assigned CASA youth, if I just wait, if I listen more than I talk, they come around.

Because of Ed’s attention to detail, his capacity to think through a problem/circumstance, his inquisitive disposition, and his trust in his intuition, Ed has gleaned the respect of legal parties and professionals involved. Ed writes a thorough court report and advocates for his CASA youth at the court hearing.

There have been several instances when the lines of communication between the ‘pertinent parties’ were breaking down. Ed, knowing that his CASA youth’s permanent placement was in the balance, was the one who mediated the misunderstandings, opening the door for clarity. Currently everybody involved is on the same page, working for the same goal. The number of reset hearings has all but vanished and what the foster parents felt were roadblocks are a faint memory. Ed would never claim that his part in the positive movement in his CASA youth’s situation was that significant but it is obvious that his willingness to trust ‘his intuition’ and keep the doors of communication open meant that his CASA teen will have the family he deserves.

When asked for his advice to those just beginning their journeys as CASA Volunteers, Ed answered, “If you don’t know what you’re doing, call up your Supervisor and keep talking until you do... remember they are there for you, so use them”.

It is always pleasing when a CASA Volunteer says “yes” to a second assignment. When asked why he decided to do so, Ed answered, ‘I get as much from being a CASA as the kids do...a huge sense of accomplishing something...I feel like I’m helping in a real way and that counts for a lot’.

— Written by, Phyllis M Felton, Ed’s Supervisor



A Happy Ending....Adoption

Jemmy* first came into foster care as a heroin-addicted, HIV exposed, newborn in late summer of 2010. She was the ninth child of a mother who had struggled with serious heroin addiction since a teenager and who was ill with the AIDS virus. Each of Jemmy’s siblings had also been placed into foster care. Several have subsequently been adopted.

Jemmy went into foster care in the home of Ms. Samms when she was two weeks old, there being no relatives to care for Jemmy. Jemmy’s placement never changed from that day forward and it didn’t take long at all for Ms. Samms to fall in love with Jemmy. A year and a half after she was born Ms. Samms agreed with the caseworker that she would be willing to apply to be an adoptive resource for Jemmy.

Because of Jemmy’s circumstances at birth and because of her mother’s illness, there had been fears that she might inherit HIV. Happily, Jemmy has consistently tested negative for HIV, much to the relief of her caretaker and everyone who worked on her case!

CASA was appointed to Jemmy’s case in February of 2012 to strongly advocate for permanency. Jemmy’s CASA volunteer dutifully

visited Jemmy each month, noting to the court in her recommendations for permanency how Jemmy was thriving and content in the care of Ms. Samms.

In April of 2012, because Jemmy’s mother refused to attend visits, hearings, or any meetings related to Jemmy, the Department of Social Services (DSS) successfully got reasonable efforts at reunification waived making the path to her adoption open!

After 2 years and many court appearances, Ms. Samms dream of adopting Jemmy became a reality, when in December of 2012, witnessed by CASA, Judge Kershaw of Baltimore City Juvenile Court, decreed the adoption final!



Judge Robert Kershaw, “Jemmy” and her new mother.

*names changed for confidentiality. — picture provided with permission of adoptive mother)

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

It takes all of us, everyday people, to stand up and commit to making a meaningful difference in the lives of abused and neglected children. CASA of Baltimore is grateful to all our donors and supporters; public grants and private foundations, businesses and individuals. (If we have omitted anyone, we offer our apologies — please inform us!)

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in Baltimore's foster care system

Check our website for more
information coming soon!
www.casabalt.org or contact
Susan Burger
at 410-244-1465



Our deepest sympathies to the Musika family
on the loss of Terry Musika,
a beloved husband and father,
a valued professional,
and a terrific CASA Volunteer.
He will be missed by so many.



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Loving is the art of caring.
Caring is the art of sharing.
Sharing is the art of living.**

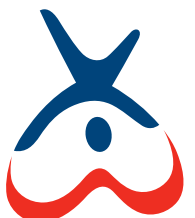
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